



FIRE PROTECTION BUREAU

PLANNING AND CONDUCTING CERTIFICATION EXAMINATIONS

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PLANNING AND CONDUCTING A CERTIFICATION EXAMINATION

Background

Certification tests for competency in fire service occupations are based on standards adopted by the Fire Protection Policy Board. Testing is approved by the Washington State Fire Protection Bureau to be conducted by regions or approved institutions. The region or institution conducting the certification test will act as the host and sponsor for the test. All examinations are coordinated through the Fire Protection Bureau Fire Standards, Accreditation and Certification unit.

Fire Protection Bureau staff provides administrative guidance and support and conducts and/or arranges the formal written examination. The sponsoring region is responsible for providing the test site, equipment, and conducting the practical skills portion of the test.

Planning

The first step in planning for a certification test is to advise the Regional Training Council of their intention to conduct a certification test, then contact the Regional Deputy State Fire Marshal or Fire Standards and Accreditation Program Manager to arrange and plan the certification test.

The planning window for the Firefighter I test requires about 60-90 days from start to actual test date. The window does not begin until the region files a test registration form with the Fire Protection Bureau. A *registration form* is available on our website at wsp.wa.gov. The Regional Deputy State Fire Marshal or other Certified Test Control Officer will assist the organization in coordinating for personnel or logistics that are not readily available. Lists of Evaluators, Senior Evaluators and Test Control Officers are available by contacting the State Fire Marshal's Office, Fire Standards, Accreditation and Certification. The planning time for other levels may differ, i.e. Instructor I, is 30-60 days.

Planning Considerations

Preliminary consideration should be given to the issues listed below. Each of the areas is summarily discussed in this document.

- The number of potential candidates to participate in the test
- The availability of references to candidates
- Administrative personnel required to conduct the test
- An adequate training/testing site
- Live fire testing component (see test construction guide and live fire manual for information on live fire evaluations)
- Fire equipment/apparatus to conduct each test station (Firefighter I and II)
- Training props to conduct each test station (Firefighter I and II)

Test Candidates

PLANNING AND CONDUCTING A CERTIFICATION EXAMINATION

Until a region gains experience in conducting certification testing, the number of candidates to be

tested should be limited to ten or less.

Once the region's test application has been filed, the region will publish an announcement and application of the test. The announcement should list the student study material, references, and sample written exam and practical skill sheets. Anyone may apply to take the test, however, there may be prerequisites that must be met prior to being approved for testing.

Candidates submit their applications, supporting documentation, and any fees, by a designated cutoff date to the region for approval. The region is responsible to review the applications and to ensure that all documentation is provided and prerequisites are met.

Candidates should have a minimum of 60 days notification to have adequate time to prepare for the test.

Test References

Certification testing is based on the NFPA standards and other specified references for the occupational level being tested. For example: NFPA 1001, 2002 edition, IFSTA Essentials of Firefighting, 4th edition are the primary references used for the Firefighter I examination; Instructor I is based on NFPA 1041, 2002 Edition of Fire Service Instructor and study material is IFSTA Fire Service Instructor, 6th Edition. Appropriate references are available at www.wsp.wa.gov Click on State Fire Marshal's office and then on Fire Standards, Accreditation and Certification or contact us at 360-753-0453 or email to barbara.gagner@wsp.wa.gov.

Test Content and Passing Criteria

NFPA standards prescribe the minimum competency for each occupational level. Candidates for certification are responsible for cognitive and skills based knowledge of all of the standards. A comprehensive written examination is given to candidates to test their knowledge base relative to the standards. Candidates must also demonstrate competence in practical skills.

Some levels of certification require the candidate to be tested on 100% of the standard. For other levels, a representative sampling of the practical skills is selected from the NFPA standards to evaluate each candidate's competence. Test candidates do not know which of the skills will be tested at the site when it is based on a representative sample. Candidates are required to pass the skills test with 100% competency on the standards selected for testing on that day.

The written examination consists mainly of multiple choice questions. Candidates must score 80 percent on the written examination. Successful candidates of both written and practical examinations will receive an IFSAC numbered certification of competency.

Arbitration and Retests

There are established procedures for on-site arbitration and a retest policy. If a candidate fails the written exam, they are allowed to retake the exam on another date. On the practical exam, if a candidate fails up to three tasks, they are allowed to retest at the same test site with a different evaluator. Candidates who fail the 4th task are sent home and given direction to contact Fire Standards, Accreditation and Certification for re-test opportunities. In addition, candidates that

PLANNING AND CONDUCTING A CERTIFICATION EXAMINATION

fail the same task twice in the same day, will have to retest at another test site on another day. Candidates are advised of the practical exam results on the day of the test.

PLANNING AND CONDUCTING A CERTIFICATION EXAMINATION

The time frame for notification of candidates begins when all documentation for the test has been received in the Fire Standards, Accreditation and Certification office. Documentation includes candidate applications, pre-requisites, pass/fail rosters for the practical exam and live fire exam and any materials supplied by Fire Standards, Accreditation and Certification to take the exam.

FIREFIGHTER - TESTING INFORMATION

Several NFPA standards for Firefighter I and II may not be conducive to site testing due to complexity, redundancy of certification, time constraints, or environmental limitations. Therefore, live fire testing may be done on a different day at a different location. Review the live fire manual for specifics.

The areas listed here are entrance requirements. Prior to certification testing, evidence of the following must be submitted to the test control officer:

PRE-REQUISITES:

- ***Fire Control*** - **NFPA 5-3.6 Vehicle Fire; 5-3.7 Exterior Class A Fire; 5-3.10 Interior Structure Fire; and 5-3.16 Extinguish Incipient Class A, B, C Fires; 5-3.19 Ground Cover Fire. The requirement of extinguishing live fires at the regional test sites is not always practical due to environmental limitations across the state. Candidates must show documented proof of completion of live fire training. Proof may include live fire training and completion of appropriate evaluation sheets signed by a third party evaluator. Contact Fire Standards, Accreditation and Certification for the test construction guide which has more information on live fire testing.**
- ***Emergency Medical Care*** - Candidates must show documented evidence of certification as a Firefighter First Responder, Emergency Medical Technician, Paramedic, or proof of meeting the performance requirements listed in NFPA 1001, 4-3 standard and signed off by the Chief or designee.
- ***Hazardous Materials Incidents - NFPA 472 Chapter 4*** Candidates must show documented evidence of meeting the job performance requirements defined in the competencies for the First Responder at the Awareness Level, of NFPA 472, 2002 edition, Standard for Professional Competence of Responders to Hazardous Materials Incidents.
- ***Prevention, Preparedness, and Maintenance - NFPA 5-5.1 and 5-5.2*** Candidates must show documented evidence of performing a fire safety survey in a private dwelling, and of presenting fire safety information to station visitors or small groups. A declaration sheet signed by the Chief or designee, will show proof of meeting these standards, or the Chief or Chief's designee may use the appropriate evaluation sheets.

Personal Protective Equipment - Candidates must arrive at the test site with full protective clothing and SCBA that meets current safety standards. Personal protective equipment should be inspected at the candidate's department prior to the test date. All equipment must be ready and functional prior to inspection at the test site by the safety officer. Candidates should bring all of the equipment and clothing listed in the test announcement and two full air tanks. Test Control

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PLANNING AND CONDUCTING A CERTIFICATION EXAMINATION

Officers will dismiss candidates who have shown up with inappropriate or deficient gear that is not in compliance with NFPA standards.

Fees - Regions may wish to charge administrative fees to the candidates to recoup some of the expenses of conducting the test. Due to time constraints on the day of the test, the region may also wish to include a fee for a box lunch for the staff and candidates.

Test Administration Personnel - There are a number of personnel necessary to effectively administer the certification test. Some of the positions are filled by personnel from the Fire Protection Bureau or Certified Test Control Officers, Senior Evaluators, and certified evaluators however, other positions may be filled from within the host department and region. Experience has shown that a region benefits from using the Incident Command System (ICS) to conduct the certification exam. The following positions are related to the Incident Command structure:

- The **TEST CONTROL OFFICER** represents the Fire Protection Bureau and operates as part of a unified command structure under the ICS. This position is normally held by the Regional Deputy State Fire Marshal, or other Bureau appointed and/or certified individual, who is responsible for test security, arbitration, test policy, and overall test management. The test control officer is responsible for filling self audits on the certification exam to ensure test integrity is maintained. May also serve as Senior Evaluator.
- The **Senior Evaluator** is responsible for evaluating each station evaluator during the practical. This position is also responsible for ensuring re-tests are conducted by different evaluators. May also serve as Test Control Officer. The Senior Evaluator may also conduct evaluator training to ensure evaluators are available to conduct the test. The Senior Evaluation is also responsible for signing off new evaluators at a test site.
- The **TEST SITE COORDINATOR** position, which corresponds to the position of the Incident Commander under the ICS, is responsible for the overall management of the test site, logistics, supervision of the test stations, movement of personnel, and conduct of the test.
- The **SAFETY OFFICER** is responsible for safety briefings, safety inspections of protective equipment and test stations, and for safety of the site during the test.
- The **OPERATIONS CHIEF** manages personnel staging, test proctors, evaluators, and communications during the testing process.
- The **LOGISTICS CHIEF** manages the equipment, apparatus, props, and setup of the test site.

Position recommendations are based on experience gained during previous tests. Functions and duties may be combined. Firefighter exams require the appointment of a safety officer. All evaluators however act as safety officer at their station if the appointed safety officer is not present.

A qualified evaluator is required at each test station. These personnel must receive training and be approved by the Fire Protection Bureau to evaluate the level of certification being tested. Additionally, evaluators must conform with IFSAC requirement for "third-party testing." The "third party" is defined as being an evaluator who has not instructed the candidate in the skill being tested.

PLANNING AND CONDUCTING A CERTIFICATION EXAMINATION

Regional Deputy State Fire Marshals or Fire Standards, Accreditation, and Certification may assist the organization in coordinating for evaluators from outside the region or geographical proximity. Evaluators should be selected at least 45 days prior to the test date so as to allow sufficient time for scheduling.

Test Site Requirements - Certification testing requires an adequate training/test site and equipment to support the test stations. The administrative portion of the test requires an adequate classroom in which to administer the written examination. The same room can double as the briefing room and a break area for the staff and candidates. This room should be located near to rest room facilities.

The practical skills portion of the test requires a controlled test area that is adequate for several test stations. The test area should include a staging area with drinking water, a first aid station, and a command post. See *recommended equipment list and tips on testing at end of document*.

Control and Communications - The command post, staging area, safety area, first aid station, and all individual test stations should be clearly marked. All administrative personnel should be identified by ICS vests and hard hats. Additional hard hats should be available for visitors. The operations group should use the ICS system to control personnel movement on the test site. Hand held radios for communication between the test stations and the command post should be considered for efficiency of test site management.

Rehearsal and Setup - The most critical element for conducting a certification test is the availability and setup of equipment and apparatus so that each testing station has the equipment that is needed and the testing begins at the scheduled time.

A full rehearsal prior to the test is required to allow the Incident Commander to identify any deficiencies and to provide the evaluators an opportunity to become familiar with their specific stations and script. Final setup of equipment can be accomplished on the morning of the test.

Sample Schedule of Firefighter I Test Events

| | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 8 to 8:30 a.m. | Briefing; candidates and test staff receive briefing about policies, procedures, and scheduling. |
| 8:30 to 10:30 a.m. | Written examination. |
| 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. | Safety briefing and inspection of equipment. |
| 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. | Lunch. |
| 12:30 to 1 p.m. | Command post and staging area; candidates report to the command post for assignment, don protective equipment, and report to test stations. |
| 1 to 4 p.m. | Practical skills testing. |
| 4 to 4:30 p.m. | Retests. |
| 4:30 to 5 p.m. | Exit critique. |

PLANNING AND CONDUCTING A CERTIFICATION EXAMINATION

Practical Skills Scenario - The Fire Protection Bureau provides a task sheet for each demonstration skill required by the NFPA standards. Because of the large number of practical skills in the firefighter series, it is not feasible to test every skill. At the same time the practical skills test must be comprehensive. Contact your Deputy State Fire Marshal or Fire Standards, Accreditation and Certification for more information on developing scenarios. A test construction guide is also available which gives the details regarding the number of skills to select for each exam.

If the skills test is designed for random selection, the candidates do not know which skills will be tested and must be prepared to demonstrate competency for any standard. A number of representative tasks are randomly selected for testing, and a scenario or evolution is developed for each test station. The task sheets are used as grading sheets by the evaluators to determine a candidate's competency.

Summary - While the certification testing process requires a concentrated effort, it has been successfully demonstrated with region resources. The Fire Protection Bureau provides as much assistance as is desired or needed. The successful accomplishment of a certification test is a significant step toward professional recognition of firefighters and the organizations they represent.

For test dates check with your regional training council or contact Fire Standards, Accreditation and Certification Program Manager DSFM Barbara Gagner at 360-753-0453 or barbara.gagner@wsp.wa.gov.

Pre-requisites may be found on the website at www.wsp.wa.gov/fire/accredit

PLANNING AND CONDUCTING A CERTIFICATION EXAMINATION

WSP- Fire Protection Bureau
Fire Standards, Accreditation & Certification

FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT NEEDED AT FIREFIGHTER I TESTING SITE

Facilities:

- Minimum of three (3) floors or two (2) floors and a roof -Inside and outside stairwells
- Standpipe
- Fire department sprinkler connection and water motor alarm
- Automatic sprinkler head

Safety:

- Fire service lighting equipment
- power supply, lights, cords, connectors, ground-fault interrupter
- Portable radio
- Charged hose line
- Fire apparatus with seat belts and hearing protection
- Building with the following utilities: water, electricity, gas meter/tank

Fire Alarm and Communication:

- Paper and pencil
- Mobile/portable radio

Fire Extinguishers:

- Variety of portable fire extinguishers: class A (water and dry chemical), B, C,&D
- Foam generating equipment used by local authority
- Pumper
- If active fire: fuel, burn permits, assistance for safe operations
- Charged 1 1/2 to 1 3/4 " hose line with adjustable fog nozzle

Protective Equipment:

- Helmet with eye shield, hood, boots, gloves, protective coat, protective trousers, SCBA, eye protection, personal alert safety system (PASS)

SCBA:

- Full set of SCBA
- Smoke generator, smoke building/room
- Restricted opening, rescue rope
- Extra full air cylinder, empty air cylinder
- Cleaning materials: mild cleaner/disinfectant and warm water, cloth
- Cascade system

PLANNING AND CONDUCTING A CERTIFICATION EXAMINATION

- Patient or dummy between 150-200 pounds, blanket
- Smoke room, rope or hose line
- Safety harness: classes I, II, and III
- Stretcher/backboard, three assistants

PLANNING AND CONDUCTING A CERTIFICATION EXAMINATION

Forcible Entry:

- Three types of doors, windows, and walls
 - Doors: open outward, open inward with stops sliding door, overhead door.
 - Windows: checkrail, casement, projected, awning or jalousie.
 - Walls: masonry, metal, wood frame, partition.
- Forcible entry tools appropriate for doors, windows, and walls used.
- K-tool and/or A-tool, suitable door for demonstration, and any other forcible entry tools that may be needed
- Cutting, prying, pulling, and/or striking tools

Ventilation:

- Axe or other pieces of equipment to "sound" a roof, a roof or simulated roof.
- Training structure filled with artificial smoke and sealed, a charged 1 1/2" hose line with adjustable fog nozzle, smoke ejector(s), blower(s), power source, axe, power saw
- Two different styles of windows, variety of forcible entry tools
- Glass window or glass door, axe or other forcible entry tool
- Ladders (ground and roof), axe, power saw, pike pole, roof or roof prop (flat and pitched roof)

Ropes:

- Ropes for knot demonstrations
- At least a 50' length of rope, ladder, axe, pike, pole, hose -Water, soap, scrub brushes
- Ladder (12, 14, or 16 feet)

Ladders:

- 12 -20 foot single or wall ladder, 16 -35 foot extension ladder, and folding/attic ladder, additional personnel for assistance
- Fire axe, life belt/safety harness, entry tools
- Aerial ladder (if available to authority having jurisdiction), forcible entry tool, hose appliance, simulated unconscious victim (150-200 pounds)
- Roof Ladder

Fire Hose, Appliances, and Streams:

- Fog nozzle, variety of solid stream nozzles, stacked tip, spanner wrenches, gated wye, Siamese or similar appliances
- Two pre-connected 1 1/2" and larger hose lines, 24 foot extension ladder pumper, inside stairwell, outside stairwell, rope for hoisting
- Fire engine, 200' of 2 1/2" or larger supply hose, 50' section of 1 1/2" or 2 1/2" hose, 50' section of 2 1/2" or 3" hose, two lengths of fire hose, hose lamp, nozzle
- Secured 24' extension ladder, charged attack line (1 1/2" or larger), length of rope or rope hose tool
- 100' of attack line of 1 1/2" or larger, standpipe (a capped water discharge can simulate a standpipe)
- 300' of supply line 2 1/2" or larger, engine
- Charged 1 1/2 to 1 3/4" hose line, fog nozzle
- Variety of nozzles (at least five) and tips

PLANNING AND CONDUCTING A CERTIFICATION EXAMINATION

Foam Fire Streams:

- Foam fire stream arrangement

Salvage:

- Salvage cover, one assistant
- Salvage cover, one assistant, and simulated furnishings
- Two plastic tarps or salvage covers, a straight ladder longer than either cover; or as alternate: a plastic tarp or salvage cover and two pike poles the same length as the cover or a set of stairs
- Salvage cover or plastic tarp
- Salvage cover, plastic tarp, plywood, nails, roofing/tar paper, laths
- Salvage covers, plastic tarps, some furniture, charged hoseline, salvage and overhaul equipment
- Salvage covers, plastic tarps, water vacuums, mops, brooms, etc., 3 assistants.

Overhaul:

- Pike pole, fire axe, prying tool, and other relevant tools

Water Supplies:

- Fire apparatus, hydrant, 2 1/2" or larger soft supply hose (alternate-hard suction), hydrant wrench, hydrant gate
- Fire apparatus, hard suction hose, floating strainer, rubber mallet

Sprinklers:

- Two 50' section of 2 1/2" or 3" hose, fire apparatus, sprinkler connection, two spanner wrenches
- Sprinkler wedge(s) or a set of sprinkler tongs
- Sprinkler system or main control valve